



February 18, 2020  
Rob Baril, President  
District 1199 New England  
Before the Housing Committee

*In Support of SB 105 (RAISED): AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RIGHT TO HOUSING*

Good Afternoon Senator Anwar, Representative McGee, and members of the Housing committee. My name is Rob Baril and I am president of the Service Employees International Union, District 1199 New England. Our union represents about 26,000 health care workers in Connecticut, a majority of whom live in the urban and rural settings in Connecticut. I am here today to speak in support of **SB 105 An Act Establishing a Right to Housing** because our union knows how important it is to our members, their families and the clients they care for that they have a stable environment which includes a roof over their head.

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the right to housing as a universal human right. And yet, in 2020 we have to debate the merit of this bill.

At 1199, we know that housing can be wielded by the powerful as a tool of oppression and discrimination. Throughout history, we have seen racist policies such as redlining used to deny and rob non-white families the ability to obtain stable housing and accrue and build generational wealth. According to the United States 2018 Census Homeownership rates, approximately 70% of White families own homes, while only 47% of Hispanic families and 42% of Black families own homes. We need to call systemic racism what it is and do better. This bill is a start.

While working with our members and the populations they provide care for, we have witnessed the critical need for housing. We have seen the devastating impact that even the threat of eviction can have on a low-income worker. On the other side, we have seen the uplifting ability that stable housing can have on an individual struggling with mental health issues or substance abuse. Anyone who knows someone who has struggled with homelessness or has been homeless themselves understands that housing is the foundation for improving one's life. Without stable housing, it is incredibly difficult to utilize the critical social programs that can get someone back on their feet and working towards a brighter future.

We must ask ourselves as we debate this bill, what kind of state is Connecticut and what does it say about our great state if we continue to deny housing as a right to all of our residents. We are talking about human beings. As a state, let's do better.

Thank you for your time.